

## Diversity Statement

In the first couple of months of college, in my first Core course at Quinnipiac University, we had a guest lecturer to facilitate a discussion about diversity. Tyrone Black, the Director of Multicultural Affairs at the time, created an impassioned discussion about diversity and inclusion that, to me, illuminated how narrowly I viewed the topic. Diversity encompasses all kinds of differences and inclusivity goes beyond having quotas; it requires understanding and making people of all different cultures and experiences feel welcomed.

I worked with Dr. Black for the rest of my college experience as part of the Board of Multicultural Affairs. The diversity retreats provided a rich learning experience as the leaders of campus groups described what it was like to be part of their community on campus. I found it illuminating to facilitate conversations about the experiences of students in Gay, Lesbian and Straight Supporters (GLASS), the Black Student Union (BSU), and various international student groups. I was awe-struck by many of my peers' experiences on campus and how their life been affected by both implicit and explicit actions by others.

As a poor student with an opioid addicted parent, I often felt out of place. I remember realizing I was different from other students when I was put on free lunch – instead of having a ticket like most students, I was left to explain why I didn't have one and that my name was on "the list" and then later explaining it to those near me in line. During one of the diversity retreats, I shared this experience, something I never felt comfortable doing before. It was easier to simply play privilege, something I learned how to do well throughout my life. I felt extraordinarily relieved to be myself and I realized how nice it felt to be with a group of students that were open and tolerant to difference – it was like taking a deep breath after years of nervous, shallow breathing. In this moment, I realized the relief many of my peers and friends were searching for – a place they don't have to pretend to "fit in," and how much harder it is for those with a visible difference who don't have the option of pretending.

These experiences have led me to feel personally compelled to spread the message of inclusivity and to have it inform my actions in and out of the classroom. I aim to be a person that helps create an environment where people feel they belong, and that they are heard, understood, and appreciated. I think that these learning experiences were among the most valuable from my college education, as they made me a better person and friend. As a teacher, these experiences have led me to take the time to make a concerted effort to ensure that no student feels invisible by emphasizing learning at students' own pace, providing resources for students of all math experience and curating new examples that explore all demographics and disciplines.

I found this personal growth to be invaluable as a graduate student and new teacher. While a graduate student instructor at the University of South Carolina, I experienced students from a variety of backgrounds. I recall one student, an ex-Marine, coming back to school. He was easily twenty years older than any other student and he suffered from PTSD, something I only found out later. At one point I had handed back exams and this student was visibly distraught about not meeting the expectations he held for himself. At the end of class, I asked him if he wanted to chat and he responded that chatting right now wouldn't be good for anyone. I reached out to him via email after class, not to criticize his behavior in class but to see if he was okay and what we could do to move forward productively. We talked on the phone for a half hour that day about how he was beating himself up for not meeting the standards of perfection that the Marines instilled in him. He thanked me for being so patient with him and we continued the dialog all semester toward learning to accept and recognize our responsibility for creating uncomfortable misunderstandings.

At Colgate, I've had many experiences to learn about inclusivity in the classroom; we have teaching discussions organized by the Center for Learning, Teaching, and Research as well as a yearly event where we explore topics like power, privilege, and pedagogy. In one such session, we looked at textbook examples across fields and noticed how normative the examples were. The boss asked *his* secretary if *she* would make copies. The scientist finally proved *his* hypothesis. A text without diverse examples makes under-represented groups invisible and reifies such narratives. I've taken this experience as an invitation to create better examples that represent a variety of groups. For example, we discuss data from projects like The Social Justice Sexuality Project, which explores how the intersectionality of sexuality and race affect those populations.

In addition, I employ evidence-based practices to make my classes as accessible as possible, as delineated in my teaching statement. This is important because access to the command mathematics is not evenly distributed and it is well known that these discrepancies are associated with the communities we grow up in. I strongly believe that creating a community that is welcoming to a diverse group of students is a critical responsibility of each member of the campus community. I have been able to leverage techniques to create communication channels that give frequent individualized feedback to be proactive in reaching out to students that are struggling for any reason, which is important as education literature suggests that students from less privileged backgrounds are less likely to seek assistance when needed (Jack, 2016).

I feel very lucky to teach statistics at a liberal arts university, which allows for many extra-curricular learning opportunities. During my five semesters at Colgate, there have been several events that have impacted various populations on campus. There have been times we received campus-wide advisories from the Dean of the College about a possible sexual assault on campus and one event where a Black student carrying a glue gun was reported as an alleged armed person on campus. It is a common, and generally well-founded, criticism that professors in

the sciences are hands off when it comes to social concerns or the “feelings” of students, but I try to break that mold. After the alleged sexual assault, we talked about the 2015 HEDS Sexual Assault Campus Climate Survey. This allowed me to describe some sampling techniques and numerical summaries while educating students about their community, the services and educational opportunities available to them and, perhaps, how to view their actions through another’s lens. After the alleged armed person on campus, we talked about Seeing Black: Race, Crime, and Visual Processing (Eberhardt et al., 2004). This research suggests that merely exposing people to Black male faces lowers the perceptual threshold at which they detect degraded images of crime-relevant objects.

I want all of my students to feel that I care enough to mention what happened by not making it an invisible problem, but an invitation to learn more about ourselves, our community and how different groups experience the same events differently. It is important to recognize there’s a problem, to take a stance of prevention, and revisit how we think about the action and inaction of our community when something does happen. I facilitate conversations about these issues throughout the semester using data from studies and experiments that explore such topics. I’ve found that my collaborative projects with sociologists and psychologists that explore topics in discourse analysis and implicit bias go hand-in-hand with my teaching. For example, in my data analysis course we were able to talk about implicit bias in decades worth of stop and frisk data and how discourse about groups can influence how people perceive suffering; e.g., people may be less willing to help “a camp full of refugees” than “refugees in a camp.” I hope to guide students to recognize experimental design and practice statistical inference while exposing them to research that can help them view their actions and thoughts in a new light with nuanced scrutiny. I hope to spark curiosity in students to seek education on the topics that matter to them and their peers so they can ensure that they’re making the right decisions.

I try to draw on my own experiences to empathize with students from a variety of backgrounds. I remember how disheartening it was to feel like I didn’t fully belong to the campus community or that I couldn’t be myself. I recognize that I will likely never be able to fully understand many students’ experiences and how their varying and intersecting identities affect their access to education and aspirations. My background led me toward having a growth mindset which was often achieved by countless hours of work, and trial and error. I sometimes grapple with this in the classroom where I catch myself expecting that same mentality from students with very different experiences. I remember the experience of mismatched expectations and that motivates me to do better. I think this will always be an area I can grow and I’m committed to doing so. I want and plan to learn how to ask and answer better questions about my own teaching pedagogies and how they affect all types of students. I’m open and eager to learn from my colleagues and students about how to create a more inclusive classroom by recognizing any blind spots I may have. I want to ensure I make *all* students feel understood and listened to. I want students of all experiences and backgrounds to feel like they have control in the classroom to make the experience something that is as empowering for them as it was for me.